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Message Text

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12
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SAM-01 AID-05 EB-07

SAJ-01 /051 W
---------- 019339
R 101500Z JAN 75 ZFG
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5954
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, MT, AS
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION VISITS MALTA

REF: VALLETTA 1796

1. A DELEGATION OF SOME FORTY AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND PRESS PREPRESENTATIVES VISITED MALTA DECEMBER 28-30, AS PART OF THE GROUP'S EXTENDED TOUR OF VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IN THE ABSENCE OF PRIME MINISTER GOUGH WHITLAM, WHO HAD RETURNED TO AUSTRALIA BECAUSE OF THE DARWIN CYCLONE DISASTER, THE VISIT TO MALTA WAS LED BY MR. LIONEL BOWEN, SPEICAL MINISTER OF STATE.

2. WHILE IN MALTA, MR. BOWEN MET WITH MALTESE PRIME MINISTER DOM MINTOFF, AND THE DELEGATION HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH GOM MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND TOURISM PAUL XUERBEB AND WITH OFFICIALS OF THE GOM MINISTRY OF COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. PRESIDENT AND LADY MAMO ALSO GAVE A DINNER AT SAN ANTON PALACE FOR THE DELEGATION DURING THE VISIT.

3. AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION SOURCES HAVE TOLD THE
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EMBASSY THAT THE FORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH MINTOFF AND

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OTHER GOM OFFICIALS FOCUSED ON MALTA'S UNFAVORABLE BALANCE OF TRADE WITH AUSTRALIA. BECAUSE OF AUSTRALIA'S OWN EXPORT TRADE PROBLEMS, THE DELEGATION WAS UNABLE TO OFFER MINTOFF ANY SATISFACTION ON THIS SUBJECT. THE AUSTRALIANS HAD EXPECTED MINTOFF TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF MALTESE IMMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIAN AID FOR THE MALTESE ECONOMY, BUT MINTOFF DID NOT DO SO.

4. COMMENT: THE AUSTRALIAN VISIT RECEIVED MUCH LESS PUBLICITY THAN THAT USUALLY ACCORDED VISITING DELEGATIONS, ESPECIALLY MINTOFF'S "NON-ALIGNED" FRIENDS FROM THE ARAB COUNTRIES. GOM DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION DID NOT EVEN ISSUE AN OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE ON THE VISIT. THE FACT THAT THE DELEGATION DID NOT COME BEARING GIFTS, PLUS THE ABSENCE OF PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. DOUBTLESS DAMPENDED MINTOFF'S ENTHUSIASM. SMITH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, TRAVEL REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975VALLET00034
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750013-0880
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750160/aaaacanz.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 VALLETTA 1796
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 JUN 2003 by SmithRJ>; APPROVED <05 JUN 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION VISITS MALTA
TAGS: PFOR, MT, AS, (WITLAM, E GOUGH)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006